

## HOMILY – 30<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF THE YEAR – 29 OCTOBER 2017

One of the first pop songs I can remember in the 1960s was by the Beatles, “All You Need is Love”. Even as a small child of six or seven, it seemed to me a reasonable message, that if you try and love everybody then life should be good.

Then, a few years later, I heard on the radio that the Beatles were splitting up. So, I thought to myself, what is going on here, then singing about love and then their ‘splitting’ up? It all sounds a bit mad and a contradiction. They sing one thing and do another.

In truth, humanity is inconsistent with love. It is like the teenage girl falling in love for the first time, she picks up a daisy flower and plucks off its petals, one by one, reciting, “he loves me, he loves me not”, hoping for a positive result, but lives in confusion.

Pop groups come and go, sadly too many marriages come and go, even so called ‘close friends’ can come and go. The nature and experience of individual love for another can be demanding, complex and affected too much by the circumstances of life. In truth, we forget that love is not merely physical and emotional, it is also spiritual and communal, especially when faith in God is our greatest love.

The Greeks have four or five different words for love, expressed beautifully in Pope Benedict’s first encyclical in *Deus Caritas Est*, “God is Love”. There is carnal love (of the flesh), Caritas love (charitable love), Communio love (of the wider community), filial love (brothers and sisters) and Agape love (faith centred love)

It is that which Jesus teaches us today in the Gospel. That true love is unselfish but honest. Let me explain. That with faith in God, we can truly say that “I love you but I don’t like what you are doing”. For example, you may say to your little son, who has broken Granny’s window with a stone, I love you Michael but I do not approve of what you have done to Granny’s window, why don’t you say sorry?

Jesus teaches us repeatedly to love the sinner but hate the sin. That the sin committed should not be the cause of ending the love affair. Otherwise, the world would have been condemned thousands of years ago. Remember the words of God to the Prophet Jonah, “If I can find three good men in Nineveh, then I will not destroy the city”.

Jesus never uses the word ‘like’ when describing others. It is always the word ‘love’. The word ‘love’ connects with an everlasting bond or covenant. Whereas the word ‘like’ is shallow, it is subjective, it is often selfish. What you like, I may not like. I like cabbage, you hate it. I like watching football, you hate it. You like decaffeinated, organic, fair trade coffee, I like tea instead – so what? Does it matter?

Faith in God helps us to go beyond our likes and dislikes, to something much deeper and more profound, the Commandment of love, governed by a moral code. A love beyond all telling that is built upon the desire to be utterly honest and true. And, because it is built on Divine love, that it is truly merciful and forgiving.

In other words, when there is a common love of God and our neighbour, in a relationship, we can love the sinner and hate the sin. That there is hope beyond a betrayal of that love to be truly reconciled. That is why Pope Francis launched the Year of Mercy in 2015. Because he saw the world tearing itself apart. Husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, Muslim and Jews, rich and poor,

Catholic and fellow Catholic! It is only by living the Commandment of love that we can bring the sinner back to life, by letting them see that a person rooted in the love of God will not be lost. And will still love the sinner and seek to welcome them home.

I often think if married couples who fall out and separate thought on those terms, a lot of marriages could be saved. Without faith, life is much harder.

I leave you with one thought about love. It was when the Prodigal Son remembered that he was loved by the Father, repented and turned for home, that his sins were forgiven. Let us help each other to do the same.

“All you need is love” – (Beatles)  
“All you need is the Love of God”.

And God will teach you to love your neighbour,

Amen